IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (currently amended) A system for evaluating process performance, said system comprising:

a device; and

a server connected to said device and configured to receive, from a user via said device, information pertaining to process performance evaluation categories selected by the user, said server further configured to:

receive process production capability information data using a computer, wherein the process production capability information includes a reference process that represents an ideal production process;

receive a per category weighted value assigned by a user;

compile the received information; and

display to the user information related to the production process;

compare the received information in the form of answers to respective questions presented to the user, to reference information in the form of answers to questions developed to encompass an expected range of answers from the users responding to the questions the reference process that represents the ideal production process, wherein each question is related to at least one category of the production process;

display the results of the compared information based on the weighted value assigned by the user to the user via said device wherein the results include a numerical score representing a relative capability of the process being evaluated to perform a desired manufacturing function; and

display at least one suggestion for each category of the production process for improving performance of the desired manufacturing function based on a user selection of the

category for which to display the at least one suggestion, wherein the at least one suggestion is sortable based on the categories of the production process, wherein the at least one suggestion is based on the received information in the form of answers to respective questions presented to the user, and wherein the at least one suggestion for each category of the production process is displayed based on a user selection of the category for which to display the at least one suggestion.

2. (canceled)

3. (previously presented) A system in accordance with Claim 1 wherein said server is further configured to receive information regarding at least one of a planning, shop practices, and operator skill.

4. (previously presented) A system in accordance with Claim 1 wherein said server is further configured to receive information regarding at least one of a complexity, conditions, control, error proofing, measurement, and process.

5. (previously presented) A system in accordance with Claim 1 wherein said server is further configured to receive information including a numerical score that expresses a relative capability of a process to perform a desired manufacturing function.

6. (previously presented) A system in accordance with Claim 5 wherein said server is further configured to:

sum received information weights assigned by the user for each category; and

evaluate weighted summed data based on category selected.

7. (previously presented) A system in accordance with Claim 1 wherein said device is configured to be a server for a network of customer devices.

8. (original) A system in accordance with Claim 1 wherein said server and said device are connected via a network.

9. (currently amended) A method for evaluating performance capabilities of a production process by operating a system including a server and at least one device connected to the server, said method comprising:

defining, using a computer, evaluation area categories based on an evaluation of the production performance capabilities of at least one of the process and a part being evaluated, wherein the evaluation area categories are selected by a user;

receiving, using the computer, information relevant to the capabilities of the production process within the evaluation categories, wherein the information relevant to the capabilities of the process production includes a reference process that represents an ideal production process;

receiving a per category weighted value assigned by a user;

compiling the received information;

comparing the received information in the form of answers to respective questions presented to the user, to ~~reference information in the form of answers to questions developed to encompass an expected range of answers from the users responding to the questions~~ the reference process that represents the ideal production process, wherein each question is related to at least one category of the production process;

displaying the results to the user via the device wherein the results include a numerical score representing a relative capability of the process being evaluated to perform a desired manufacturing function based on the weighted value assigned by the user; and

displaying at least one suggestion for each category of the production process for improving performance of the desired manufacturing function based on a user selection of the category for which to display the at least one suggestion, wherein the at least one suggestion is sortable based on the categories of the production process, wherein the at least one suggestion is based on the received information in the form of answers to respective questions presented to the user, ~~and wherein the at least one suggestion for each category of~~

the production process is displayed based on a user selection of the category for which to display the at least one suggestion.

10. (original) A method in accordance with Claim 9 further comprising assigning a weight factor to information received within each evaluation category.

11. (original) A method in accordance with Claim 10 wherein comparing the received information further comprises determining a relative capability of the production process to perform a desired manufacturing function.

12. (original) A method in accordance with Claim 10 wherein displaying the results further comprises numerically ranking the production process evaluation areas based on the results.

13. (original) A method in accordance with Claim 10 wherein displaying the results further comprises displaying the results in a format that facilitates comparisons between a plurality of production process evaluation areas.

14. (previously presented) A method in accordance with Claim 10 wherein defining evaluation area categories further comprises selecting at least one evaluation area category that represents at least one of production complexity, conditions, control, error proofing, measurement, operator skill, planning, process, and shop practices.

15. (currently amended) A method for evaluating performance of a production process using a network connecting a plurality of users, the network including a server and a plurality of user display devices, said method comprising:

receiving, from the users using a computer, information concerning evaluation categories relevant to the production process, wherein the evaluation categories are selected by the users, and wherein the information concerning evaluation categories relevant to the production process includes a reference process that represents an ideal production process;

assigning each evaluation category at least one weighted factor that normalizes the received information with respect to a relative contribution to a process capability improvement of the received information assigned by the user;

compiling the information received from the users with the server;

evaluating the received information in the form of answers to respective questions presented to the user, in comparison to ~~reference information in the form of answers to questions developed to encompass an expected range of answers from the users responding to the questions~~ the reference process that represents the ideal production process, wherein each question is related to at least one category of the production process;

displaying the results to the users wherein the results include a numerical score representing a relative capability of the process being evaluated to perform a desired manufacturing function based on the weighted value assigned by the user; and

displaying at least one suggestion for each category of the production process for improving performance of the desired manufacturing function based on a user selection of the category for which to display the at least one suggestion, wherein the at least one suggestion is sortable based on the categories of the production process, wherein the at least one suggestion is based on the received information in the form of answers to respective questions presented to the user, ~~and wherein the at least one suggestion for each category of the production process is displayed based on a user selection of the category for which to display the at least one suggestion~~.

16. (original) A method in accordance with Claim 15 wherein at least one user is physically remote from another user, displaying the results further comprises displaying the results in a format that facilitates comparisons between the evaluation areas.

17. (original) A method in accordance with Claim 16 wherein soliciting from the users information further comprises soliciting information relevant to at least one of production complexity, production conditions, control, error proofing, measurement, operator skill, planning, process, and shop practices.

18. (original) A method in accordance with Claim 17 wherein soliciting from the users information concerning evaluation categories further comprises soliciting information from the users via at least one of a survey, radio push-buttons, and pull-down menu.

19. (original) A method in accordance with Claim 16 wherein evaluating the received information in comparison to reference information comprises determining a relative capability of the production process to perform a desired manufacturing function.

20. (original) A method in accordance with Claim 16 wherein displaying the results further comprises numerically ranking the production process evaluation areas based on the results.